

REPORT



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# Corporate Volunteering in Tasmania

## Executive Summary

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Interest in corporate volunteering programs has grown significantly, both in Australia and overseas.

In researching this field, we can see three main stakeholder groups emerge: the 'corporate' (or for-profit business), the Volunteer Involving Organisations, and the employees who participate in the program as volunteers.

All three of these key stakeholders are faced with different environmental challenges and opportunities.

Volunteer Involving Organisations are often experiencing:

- Shrinking government funding
- More competition for volunteer resources in the sector
- Pressure to find new and innovative ways to grow income, or otherwise add value to their organisation

Corporate and for-profit businesses are often experiencing:

- Increasing expectations to contribute to their community
- Pressure to grow the visibility of their brand in the community
- Pressure to grow engagement and loyalty from their stakeholders or clients

As trends in wellbeing and mindfulness rise, it is also important to see the changing needs from the perspective of the employee group; with many employees looking to contribute more to their community, or find personal value in their working lives.

In some respects, corporate volunteering looks like an easy answer for many of these issues. Indeed, there is extensive academic and sector research highlighting the benefits and opportunities for all parties:

- For corporates, corporate volunteering programs can give them the chance to grow brand awareness in the community, generate customer loyalty and demonstrate a commitment to their values
- For Volunteer Involving Organisations, partnerships with corporates can give brand awareness, increased 'man power', including invaluable corporate expertise through volunteers with specific skills, and potential new revenue streams.
- For employees, volunteer programs give them support from their workplace to channel time into something they love or to donate their skills to the community.

Given the increasing interest in the benefits of corporate volunteering, this research project aimed to increase our understanding of how the existing national trends apply to the corporate volunteering in Tasmania.

To achieve this, Volunteering Tasmania spoke with a wide range of Tasmanian corporate organisations, Volunteer Involving Organisations, and employees.

## What did the research find?

### **Finding 1: Tasmania is in the early stages of adoption of corporate volunteering programs**

- Tasmania was less developed in the corporate volunteering space compared to other communities studied in the national and international research.
- Only a small number of corporate organisations who participated in the research had well developed corporate volunteering programs or policies.
- Some organisations had informal arrangements, and were in the early stages of creating formalised programs.
- Some currently have limited offerings specific to sectors like Emergency Services, but expressed interest in further developing their existing programs.
- Many indicated that they needed more information and tips about starting or building a corporate volunteering program.
- There was a willingness from all corporate organisations interviewed for opportunities to learn from each other, and see 'how other organisations were doing things'.

### **Finding 2: Corporates were interested in a range of volunteering opportunities**

- There were different interests across corporate organisations and a variety of structures in place.
- The majority of corporate organisations were interested in corporate volunteering as team opportunities – often for short periods of time (one off events, or one day activities). However, a number of corporates offered both individual opportunities and team events.
- Many were still exploring their programs, and how they could meet the needs of the organisation, its employees and the community.
- The majority of corporates indicated that they would benefit from information and advice on how to make their program effective and align with good practice.

### **Finding 3: Corporates experienced wellbeing and team building improvements through corporate volunteering**

- Those corporate organisations that had well development volunteering programs reported that they were seeing significant benefits for their employees.

- These benefits included skill development, wellbeing and in building camaraderie and reducing silos across their organisation.
- Corporates could also see benefits to their recruitment strategies by having a volunteer program or in supporting key causes.

**Finding 4: Building volunteering support throughout a corporate organisation is key**

- Ingraining corporate volunteering opportunities throughout all levels of the corporate organisation, and gathering support from senior management and staff was a significant challenge.
- Corporates indicated a need for better education and awareness of corporate volunteering benefits throughout their organisations, from entry level staff through to senior executives.
- Corporates varied in the way that volunteering opportunities were supported. Many indicated that the volunteering program was being championed by one area or staffing level, but none reported organisation-wide support for structured employee volunteering programs.

**Finding 5: There were challenges in designing and finding the right roles for corporate volunteers**

- Finding appropriate roles was a challenge for both corporates and Volunteer Involving Organisations.
- Corporates confirmed they were seeking employee volunteering opportunities that were easy to administer, which were usually 'episodic' and involving shorter time-frames.
- Volunteer Involving Organisations noted that these requirements did not always align with their existing volunteer roles. In turn, corporates found that many volunteering opportunities are not suited to their need for limited time frames or one off commitments.

**Finding 6: Volunteer Involving Organisations felt under resourced to set up corporate volunteering opportunities**

Volunteer Involving Organisations revealed that there was interest in the potential of corporate volunteers, however most were unsure about how corporate volunteering could work in practice. Volunteer Involving Organisations noted the cost and expense of setting up volunteering opportunities to match the needs of corporate organisations. Some also noted the lack of capability within their organisations to create new programs, induct and host employees, and establish appropriate processes and procedures (eg. insurance and compliance concerns). However, despite these challenges, many felt that if they could find the capacity within their organisation to invest in this, then the benefits would be worth the effort and costs.

**Finding 7: Volunteer Involving Organisations and employees were looking for skills based volunteer roles but opportunities for these positions were limited.**

Both Volunteer Involving Organisations and employees alike were keen to participate in skill-based volunteering opportunities. Volunteer Involving Organisations were particularly keen to engage corporate experience or technical skills into their operations. However, these types of roles, while extremely appealing and potentially highly beneficial to the Volunteer Involving Organisations, were considered non-essential to their core operations; which has limited action on this to date for many, and which may continue to restrict growth of opportunities in this area.

**Finding 8: Volunteer Involving Organisations were willing to partner with corporates**

Volunteer Involving Organisations had experienced, or could see the potential for, significant new opportunities through corporate partnerships. This varied from opportunities to increase numbers at large scale events and activities, through to gaining skills or expertise for specific projects. They could also see potential for these partnerships to generate other sources of revenue, such as corporate donations or sponsorships.

## Recommendations

To support a culture of corporate volunteering in Tasmania, Volunteering Tasmania recommends the development and dissemination of resources and programs; to build support for corporate volunteering, and to better equip all parties to participate in this model of volunteering. More specifically:

### Corporates

1. An education program is developed to raise awareness of corporate volunteering and its benefits
2. Opportunities for corporates to learn from one another are established
3. Opportunities for corporates to build relationships and networks with volunteer involving organisations are established
4. A package of resources are created, to guide and support corporates engaging in corporate volunteering, with particular emphasis on best practice and practical tools
5. Further research is undertaken to better understand the barriers preventing corporates from engaging in corporate volunteering programs – (Attachment E)

### Volunteer Involving Organisations

6. An education program is developed to raise awareness of corporate volunteering and its benefits for Volunteer Involving Organisations
7. Opportunities for Volunteer Involving Organisations to build relationships and networks with corporates are established
8. A package of resources are created, to guide and support Volunteer Involving Organisations engaging corporate volunteers, with particular emphasis on best practice and practical tools

### Employees

9. An education program is developed to raise awareness of corporate volunteering and its benefits
10. Employees are empowered through education and/or resources as to how to promote corporate volunteering to their employer
11. Opportunities for employees to build a broader and deeper awareness of Volunteer Involving Organisations in their community are established
12. Further research is undertaken to better understand the motivations of employees (as volunteers) – (Attachment E)